



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

June/July 2016

**DOUG ADAMS:
FEATURED IN IFB VIDEO**

**EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:
KURT HOEFT**

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



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a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Kurt Simon,
State Conservationist

Gaining Expertise in Soil Health

As most of you know, one of our main priorities in Iowa is improving soil health on private lands.

Beginning with the "Unlocks the Secrets in the Soil" national campaign that began in 2013, one of our major objectives is helping

farmers to understand the importance of improving the health of cropland and pasture soils. Minimizing soil disturbing activities, keeping living roots in the soil year round, keeping the soil covered as much as possible, and even incorporating animals into the system are some of our points of emphasis.

Since soil health is such an important part of our agency's future, I have asked our local experts to

provide training in this area to all of our employees, as well as the partner employees in our field offices.

Beginning in August, field staff will be trained for one or two days on the tools that show how soil health practices help to protect natural resources and improve a producer's bottom line.

Staff will learn how to use our rainfall simulators and all of the tools in the soil health bucket. Our technical staff will also learn more about the science behind healthy soil.

I am absolutely convinced that if Iowa farmers implement more practices that focus on improving soil conditions, it will serve as a foundation for improving water quality and other natural resources as well.

Thanks for all of your hard work. Have a safe summer!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kurt Simon".

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

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CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



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INFILTRATION: BIGGER ISSUE THAN EROSION?



When it comes to dealing with heavy rainfall, some conservation experts say we have more of an infiltration problem than an erosion problem.

The picture above indicates just that. It was taken by Iowa NRCS Soil Scientist Neil Sass on June 12 near Clermont in Fayette County. It shows how a no-till field (left) allows a quick 1-inch rainfall to infiltrate much easier and quickly than a field that has been tilled.

Jered Finley, area resource conservationist in West Union, took the two pictures at right this spring. The top picture is a tilled field and the bottom is no-till. "These picture shows us what our rainfall simulators show - that fields with less soil disturbing activities develop a structure that allows water to infiltrate better," he said.



Photos courtesy of Neil Sass and Jered Finley.

PLANTING GREEN: TESTING CORN INTO COVER CROPS



Buchanan County Farmer Dick Sloan planted corn into a wheat/barley/cereal rye cover crop mix that he sprayed with glyphosate just two days prior to planting. Sloan did this as part of a strip trial program with Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI).

Typically, farmers who plant corn into cover crops wait about two weeks after terminating the cover crop before planting. By the time the corn is planted, however, there is oftentimes very little cover crop left to provide any soil surface erosion protection.

"The benefit of planting just days after termination is that the cover crop will provide some soil protection until the corn spikes," says Barb Stewart, state agronomist for Iowa NRCS.

She says the key to Sloan's trial is managing nitrogen during planting. "That corn plant is going to need some extra nitrogen while the cover crop is green," she says.



Above: Rowley, Iowa farmer Dick Sloan plants corn into a three-species cover crop mix he sprayed with glyphosate just two days prior. The key management issue for Sloan is to apply a nitrogen starter.

Right: By the time the corn spiked, the cover crops were, in effect, terminated and not competing for nitrogen any longer.



Photos Courtesy of Dick Sloan.

BACK IN THE DAY

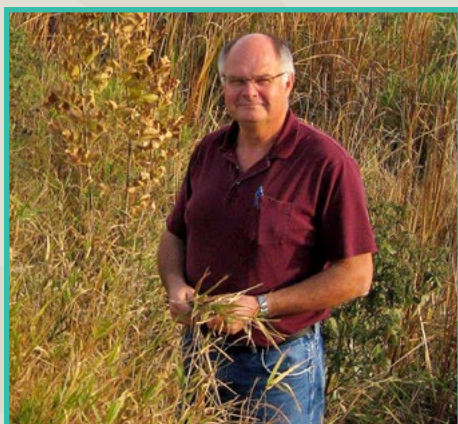
Historical Soils Photographs



- 1** September 1962: At a State Soil Conservation Field Day in Atlantic, Soil Conservationists Wilbur Jury (left) and John Nixon (pointing with a ruler) show off a soil survey educational field day exhibit to school instructors from Fremont and Page Counties.
- 2** June 1974: At a farm three miles east of De Witt in Clinton County, Technician Alex Paul and Soil Scientist Larry Johnson prepare a soil monolith tray.
- 3** August 1970: J.D. Highland uses a soil probe mounted on a truck to examine Fayette County soils.

**EMPLOYEE
SPOTLIGHT**

**Kurt
Hoeft**



Kurt Hoeft

This issue features longtime District Conservationist Kurt Hoeft, who plans to retire from his NRCS career in January 2017.

Title: District Conservationist (Howard/Mitchell Shared Management Unit)

College Education: My goal was to find a career where I assisted farmers. I am a farmer at heart! I have a twin brother, and my dad helped him get started in farming. He encouraged me to go to school.

- » Iowa State University, B.A., 1980 (Agronomy)
- » North Iowa Area Community College, A.A., 1978

Younger Years: I grew up a farm kid on a diversified farm near Charles City. We grew corn, soybeans, oats

and hay. We raised cattle, pigs and sheep.

I graduated from high school in May 1976 on a Sunday. The next day I began working for the Floyd Soil and Water Conservation District as State Aid, while attending NIACC.

Conservation Career:

- » Charles City: WAE, Soil Conservation Technician
- » Elkader: Student Trainee - Summer 1979
- » Independence: Soil Scientist - Summer 1980
- » Waterloo: Soil Conservationist - August 1980 to March 1981
- » Osage: Soil Conservationist/District Conservationist - March 1981 to September 1983
- » Tipton: District Conservationist - 1983 to 1994
- » Waverly: District Conservationist - 1994 to 2001
- » RC&D Coordinator - 2001 to 2011
- » Cresco/Osage Management Unit: District Conservationist - 2011 to Present

What Kurt Likes About His Job:

I have enjoyed the relationships I have developed with farmers after meeting with them on their farms. I still drive by their farms to see if the practices we implemented are still there after 20 years.

We have great people to work with in NRCS. Where do you find a job where you can work indoors during bad weather and outdoors enjoying the environment when the weather is good?

The people I have worked with in the NRCS/District offices have been dedicated, and team players.

One of the biggest challenges of my career has been running a Management Unit as a District Conservationist.

What Kurt Is Most Proud Of: I am proud of the staff members who worked in my offices as trainees who are now DCs or Area Staff members.

My first conservation plan I developed as a District Conservationist in Osage I was able to see the last grassed waterway I planned in 1981 be applied in 2012. Conservation does take time!

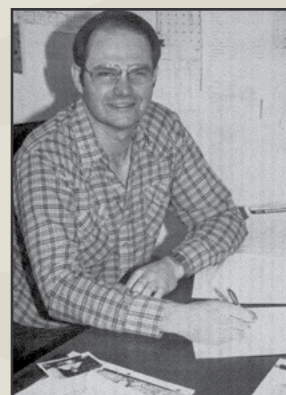
I am proud that I helped plan conservation for a 240-head dairy operation that now supports four families and markets their own brand of milk.

I assisted in the planning and worked with local farmers for a Wind Farm near Charles City that is creating energy for 20,000 homes.

Kurt's Family: I have wife (Kathy) and three children (Sarah is the Chickasaw County Extension Director; Chris manages the Theisens farm store; and Katie is a student at Iowa State).

Hobbies: I enjoy fishing, boating, gardening, and spoiling my two grandchildren.

Future Plans: I plan to retire in January 2017. I want to continue to write grants and work part-time for my brother's construction company.



Doug Adams, Soil Conservation Technician, Humboldt County

From Iowa Farm Bureau

Planting Green to Help Improve Iowa's Water Quality

Doug Adams heard the coffee-shop talk last spring when a rye cover crop in one of his fields grew seemingly out of control, reaching shoulder-high in a field due to be planted to soybeans.

"You heard people say Doug's got quite a mess. People raised some eyebrows," said Adams.

Letting the rye grow that tall wasn't his original plan, but a wet spring forced him to make adjustments. Instead of terminating the rye under less than ideal conditions, Adams decided to let it grow and "plant green" by seeding soybeans into a living cover crop on June 2.

It was something he hadn't tried before but he had read success stories about farmers in other states, such as Dave Brandt in Ohio, who have done the same thing.

"He was planting into rye up to the hood of his tractor. I'd never seen it get over knee-high," Adams said. "I was nervous, but watching it close and knowing what other farmers have done with rye this tall gave me the confidence to follow through."

Last year's experience

It's still an unusual sight to see a thick stand of grass covering the planter wheels as Adams puts his soybean crop into the ground, but last year's experience convinced him of the benefits.

"Last year was a rainy spring. I let the rye grow for quite a while, drawing the excess moisture out of the ground, and in the end we ended up with some excellent weed control, so that's what I'm trying to duplicate this year," said Adams, who works for NRCS in Humboldt.

"In addition to weed control, I also use cover crops to use up any excess nutrients that were left over from last year's crop, hopefully recycling those for this year's crop or for future use, building more organic matter as well," he said.

Last summer, the cover crop residue provided a layer of mulch that served as a weed barrier between soybean rows, Adams explained. After spraying and planting, he used a soybean roller to flatten the rye and allow more light to reach emerging soybean plants.

"When we rolled that rye down, it laid like a 3-inch mat on the ground," he said. "I had excellent weed control from day one. Very few weeds were growing through it."

Adams saw nearly no ragweed. Weed control was so good that he withheld a pre-emergence herbicide application on some of his acres this year to get a better look at how much the cover crop is helping to control weeds.



Weed control

"Last year I treated it like all the rest of my fields. I used a higher rate of glyphosate to kill that tall rye, plus 2,4-D and Enlite," he explained. This year, he left Enlite out of the mix on part of a couple of the fields.

Perhaps most importantly, Adams said there was virtually no yield difference last fall between his regular no-till soybeans, which averaged 58.7 bushels per acre, and those planted into the cover crop, which averaged 58.6 bushels.

Still, there are challenges and a learning curve just as with any new farming practice, he said. He planted May 23 this year, 10 days earlier than a year ago due to a forecast showing chances of rain for a week or longer.

"With rain in the forecast, I didn't want to wait to plant beans, so I pulled the trigger earlier," he said.

Working in green rye

He planted a day or two after terminating the crop. Waiting to plant until the rye dies and starts to fall over would increase the chances of it getting tangled in the planter.

Setting up the planter going into rye is much the same as for other no-till planters, noted Adams, who uses strip-tillage on his corn acres and no-tills soybeans. Shark-tooth row cleaners help smooth a path for seed to be planted at proper depth and accuracy.

"The rye was still pretty green (at planting). It flows pretty good through the planter," he said. "I like planting when it's still standing."

However, the rye didn't lay down as flat after rolling this year compared to a year ago, possibly because it was shorter, so Adams plans to roll it again after soybeans get a little more growth. The roller is the same as those commonly used to roll conventionally planted soybean fields to smooth out the seed bed, pushing rocks and corn stalk residue into the earth to make harvest easier.

By Eric Hurley, Nutrient Management Specialist



Eric Hurley

The Nutrient Management (590) conservation practice standard relies heavily on Iowa State University technical sources. As these are updated, the standard is, in effect, updated to use the most recent research results.

Last year [CROP 3073: Nitrogen Use in Iowa Corn Production](#) – a

new document not yet referenced in the Nutrient Management standard – specified different N recommendations for corn in southeast Iowa. It also updated recommendations for corn following alfalfa. For those of you looking to better understand how ISU makes N recommendation for corn, I think this document provides an excellent, clear explanation.

In May, the [Corn Nitrogen Rate Calculator](#) – ISU's online N recommendation tool – was updated to include the southeast Iowa recommendations, as well, as to reflect the latest corn nitrogen response research. The "Multiple Price" interface allows for entering multiple corn and/or nitrogen prices and returns N rate recommendations in a single table reflecting those different price points.

Considering the volatility of corn prices now and the likely continued fall of N prices, this would be useful to calculate various scenarios in one step. The Calculator now works better on small platforms, like smartphones.

Finally, [PM 1003: Using manure nutrients for crop production](#) has been updated with

changes to the first year nutrient availability of beef and dairy manures. Research indicates that more nitrogen may be plant available in some of these manures than previously thought, so the first year plant availability range has been changed from 30-40% to 30-50%. Liquid dairy and beef manures and those where a high fraction of the N is in the ammonium form would have more 1st year availability than manures with high organic matter-N, especially from bedding. Often, only total N is analyzed in dry manure samples, but not ammonium-N which comes primarily from the urine. With semi-solid manures, we should be encouraging producers to request ammonium-N analysis of their manure along with total N to better understand potential plant availability.

Also, P appears to be more available that first year in these manures than previously thought. PM 1003 changes the range from 60-100% to 80-100% first year plant available. The lower percent available is important if soil test P is Low or Very Low. In these cases, apply adequate manure or supplement it with commercial fertilizer to meet the crops agronomic needs that first year.

I've updated the relevant documents on the Nutrient Management Planning sharepoint site. I will update the NMP Calculator with the new manure interpretations soon.



FSA FEDS TRANSITIONS TO WAGeworks

HR
CORNER

The FSAFEDS program will transition administration from ADP to WageWorks on Sept. 1, 2016. You will continue to use the same toll-free phone number, toll-free fax number, and website (www.FSAFEDS.com) to manage your account once WageWorks assumes administration. This transition will require a "blackout period," as described below.

- » The claims submission blackout period begins on Saturday, July 30, 2016 and ends Thursday, September 1, 2016. This means that no claims can be submitted during this period.
- » You must submit any eligible claims via fax or online by 4:00 p.m., Eastern Time on Friday, July 29, 2016. If you submit claims by mail, your claims must be postmarked by Wednesday, July 20, 2016, to be processed prior to the start of the blackout period.
- » Reimbursements will continue to be issued daily with any remaining payments releasing on Monday, August 8, 2016.
- » Any eligible claims that are not submitted prior to these deadlines – and claims for any

expenses you incur during the blackout period – can be submitted beginning Thursday, September 1, 2016.

- » Paperless reimbursement claims will be suspended on July 29, 2016 as well, and processing of these claims will resume on Thursday, September 8, 2016.
- » The blackout period for online access to your account begins at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, August 26, 2016 and ends at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 1, 2016.

Your plan year dates, election amount, and available balance will remain the same.

We will send additional information and reminders over the next few months, so you will always be up-to-date.



**NRCS GOLF
TOURNAMENT
SAVE THE DATE:**

August 26

Terrace Hill Golf Course • Altoona, Iowa
2-Person, Best Shot • More Info Coming Soon!



HELPING MOM: TAKE YOUR SON/DAUGHTER TO WORK DAY

Colton Moretz, son of Iowa NRCS Area Easement Specialist Brenda Tenold-Moretz, assisted with monitoring four EWP/WRP easements in Wright County during *Bring Your Son/Daughter to Work Day* on April 25.

Tenold-Moretz says Colton established new photo points, took pictures at those points, and filled out the monitoring worksheets.

Sites included newly restored easements and older easements that were restored many years ago.

Colton is 16 years old and serves as an Earth Team Volunteer. He provided seven hours of volunteer time during his day with NRCS.

"This is a great opportunity for us to show our children what we do, and see if they have interest in doing our jobs in the future," said Tenold-Moretz.



Sixteen-year-old Colton Moretz, son of Area Easement Specialist Brenda Tenold-Moretz, helped his mom monitor four easement sites during *Bring Your Son/Daughter to Work Day* on April 25.

ON DISPLAY: WASHINGTON F.O. SHOWS OFF COVER CROP SEEDS

The Washington Field Office built a three-level cover crop seed display for their front counter. Farmers are able to generate some ideas for cover crops, depending on their individual goals. The display includes:

- » a top level of Fall Covers with Oats, a Cereal Cover Mix, Triticale, and Nitro Radish seeds;
- » a middle level of "Catch-All Covers" showing containers of a Champion Corn Mix, Cereal Rye, Annual Ryegrass and a Champion Bean Mix;
- » and a bottom rack of Legumes with containers of Crimson Clover, Hairy Vetch, Balansa Clover and Winter Pea seeds.

The display was built by Soil Conservationist Sarah Ham, Dan Mahoney and Mike Alexander.



CELEBRASIAN FESTIVAL: NRCS EXHIBITS AT DES MOINES EVENT

Submitted by Greg Townley, NRCS District Conservationist (Malcom) and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Special Emphasis Program Manager.

The 14th Annual CelebrAsian Festival was held in Des Moines on Memorial Day Weekend, with the main activities on Saturday, May 28. The festival celebrated Asian cultures and included food, drinks, music, exhibits, arts, and dances. It was held at the Western Gateway Park in downtown Des Moines.

An NRCS booth was set up to provide outreach to local people, as well as to those who come from all parts of the world. NRCS staff provided information about urban projects, gardening, hoop buildings, pollinators, and farming, as well as offering information about job opportunities within NRCS.

There were over a dozen Asian villages at the festival representing various Asian countries and featuring authentic food, educational activities, cultural exhibits, history, sports, martial arts, family-friendly activities, and live cultural entertainment. This year's theme was "Light The Way".

The CelebrAsian Festival mission is to unite diverse Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities with the purpose of fostering economic growth and broader community development within the state of Iowa. The vision is to create an Iowa in which Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders



The annual CelebrAsian Festival was held in Des Moines Memorial Day Weekend. NRCS provided an exhibit at the festival. From Left: Greg Townley, Alan Lauver, James Gibbs and Rubyana Neely worked at the NRCS booth. Nichole Baxter (Not Pictured) worked a later shift.

are an integral part of a vibrant and prosperous community.

It was good for NRCS to share in fulfilling this mission and vision. The Iowa NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Council seeks to recruit people from diverse cultures to work for NRCS and events like CelebrAsian are a great opportunity to outreach to a diverse population.

TRUMPETER SWANS: HATCH AT WRP WETLAND IN FREMONT CO.

Trumpeter Swans recently hatched in a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement just west of Riverton in Fremont County.

Photos by Carter Oliver, Technician, Pheasants Forever



Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Mancos, Ethan	Student Trainee	Resignation	4/30/16	Ida Grove
Gilles, Chad	Soil Conservationist	Conv To Career Conditional Appt.	5/1/16	Waterloo MU
Koehlmoos, Andrew	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	5/1/16	Atlantic MU
Gubbels, Julia	Program Assistant	Conv to Career Conditional Appt.	5/15/16	Atlantic Area
Breach, Scott	Farm Bill Specialist	Promotion	5/15/16	Fort Dodge Area
Brown, Pamela	Program Assistant	Promotion	5/15/16	Atlantic Area
Butler, Erik	Soil Conservation Technician	Promotion	5/15/16	Thompson MU
Hennigar, Tangela	Farm Bill Specialist	Promotion	5/15/16	Fort Dodge Area
Kragel, Jackie	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	5/15/16	Humboldt MU
Milroy, John	Program Assistant	Promotion	5/15/16	Sioux City Area
Turner, Jennifer	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	5/15/16	Maquoketa
Wynn, Melissa	Program Assistant	Promotion	5/15/16	Atlantic Area
Allen, Matthew	Soil Conservationist	Reassignment	5/16/16	Oakland MU
Dojutrek, Chris	Soil Conservationist	Conv To Career Conditional Appt.	5/29/16	Indianola
Brady, Benjamin	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Storm Lake MU
Buch, Karyee	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Clarinda MU
Dick, Nathan	Student Trainee - Engineering	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Sioux City Area
Friedrich, Madison	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Newton
Kaufmann, Lindsey	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Atlantic MU
Martin, Rene	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Carroll
Pamperin, Megan	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Ankeny
Patten, Chrystal	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/29/16	Winterset
Griem, Jennifer	Program Assistant	Promotion	5/29/16	Tipton MU
Welsh, Matthew	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	5/29/16	Spirit Lake MU
Blodgett, Kelsey	Student Trainee	Return to Duty	5/29/16	West Union
Simon, Joshua	Student Trainee	Return to Duty	5/29/16	Wapello MU
Beeler, Larry	Asst. State Conservationist (Programs)	Retirement	5/31/16	Des Moines
Olsen, Nicole	Student Trainee	Return to Duty	5/31/16	Jefferson MU
Barnes, Jeremy	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	6/12/16	Marion

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Davis, Erienne	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	6/12/16	Tipton MU
Hart, Edward	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	6/12/16	Leon
Recker, Alycia	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	6/12/16	Maquoketa

Changes In IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Labertew, Kristine	Conservation Assistant	New Hire	5/20/16	Knoxville
Wahl, Alexa	Communications Team	New Hire	5/23/16	Des Moines
Wilson, Emma	Water Quality Initiative Intern	New Hire	6/3/16	Des Moines
Daehn, Dylan	Environmental Engineer (Mines & Minerals Bureau)	New Hire	6/17/16	Des Moines

